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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PRM/A AND PRM/AFR, POSTS FOR REFCOORDS

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SUBJECT: SUDANESE REFUGEES IN KAKUMA: MORE ARRIVING, FEW RUSHING HOME

1. SUMMARY. Sudanese refugees are not excited by the prospect of returning to Sudan; in fact, as many as 6,000 new Sudanese refugees have arrived in Kakuma refugee camp since January. Theft of roofing material on vacant former Somali Bantu dwellings led to their destruction by the weather. END SUMMARY.

2. Refugee Specialist accompanied the visiting Sudan Desk Officer on a day trip to Kakuma on September 9, 2005. Due to the limited time, IRC, the host, set up a brief meeting with 25 to 30 Sudanese refugees to enable the desk officer to hear general Sudanese views on repatriation to Sudan. The prevailing sentiment was that Sudanese refugees are hesitant to return. Most are willing to go but subject to improved conditions, when infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, clinics and schools are provided. Without these improvements, some said they would rather be resettled to a third country. As one refugee said, "The difference between those who came to Kenya and those who stayed (is that) refugees are more educated, more civilized. There is no water except river water (in Southern Sudan). It is difficult to accept repatriation without modern amenities now."

3. Security is another primary concern for most. One refugee described an attack in the last few weeks in Equatoria where people were killed, property looted and women and children abducted (NFI).

4. While visiting Kakuma III, the former site of housing for the Somali Bantu, Refugee Specialist observed many tents being used as dwellings and many mud brick houses under construction. Refugee Specialist was informed that since January as many as 6,000 new Sudanese refugees had arrived in the camp, 1,200 of whom had arrived since June. Reasons for the arrival of the new Sudanese refugees included "no infrastructure" and "no medical care" in the areas from which they arrived. Only registered refugees and locals may access health clinics in the camp. Old Somali Bantu dwellings could not be used because they were destroyed when theft of the roofing material allowed disintegration of the mud brick walls from wind and rain.

5. Refugee Specialist also visited a health clinic and a President's Emergency Plan funded VCT (Voluntary Counseling and Testing) center for HIV/AIDS activities. The health clinic was small with tiny, dark and dusty offices and examination and treatment rooms. Twenty-five or 30 people waited outside in a makeshift waiting area while 10 to 15 were already being assisted. The staff said it catered for 80 or more patients per day. The VCT center is housed in a building significantly larger than the clinic. The center includes a waiting room, a counseling room and other offices. A TV and VCR stood ready for use in the waiting area, which like the offices was large, airy and well-lit. The staff said up to eight persons were seen per day. The other buildings house classrooms for use in HIV/AIDS education and other activities.

5. COMMENT: It is frustrating to see peace yield such slow results, but Sudanese refugees will not repatriate quickly and others will likely continue to arrive until there is something better to go home to. Until then, Sudanese refugees will continue to make use of the health care facilities, schools and other services available to them in Kakuma refugee camp. The differences between the VCT center and the clinic vividly reflect the contrast between levels of funding available for HIV activities as compared to primary health care.

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